

LISTING OF THE CLAIMS:

Claim 1 (Previously Presented): A method of producing polysaccharide fibers, comprising the steps of dissolving a polysaccharide in a solvent to form a solution, and spraying the solution into a bath which contains a water-miscible organic solvent and a cross-linker, wherein the solvent dissolving the polysaccharide is water, and wherein the cross-linker ionically cross-links the polysaccharide.

Claim 2 (Previously Presented): A method of producing polysaccharide fibers according to claim 1, further comprising the steps of stretching, rolling-up, drying and cutting the polysaccharide fibers after the bath.

Claim 3 (Previously Presented): A method of producing polysaccharide fibers according to claim 1, wherein the organic solvent is an alcohol or a ketone.

Claim 4 (Previously Presented): A method of producing polysaccharide fibers according to claim 3, wherein the organic solvent is methanol, ethanol, isopropanol or acetone.

Claim 5 (Previously Presented): A method of producing polysaccharide fibers according to claim 1, wherein the cross-linker is a polyelectrolyte.

Claim 6 (Previously Amended): A method of producing polysaccharide fibers according to claim 5, wherein the cross-linker is polyvinylamine or hexadimethrinbromide.

Claim 7 (Previously Presented) A method of producing polysaccharide fibers according to claim 1, wherein the cross-linker is a salt where the cation in the salt is a metal ion.

Claim 8 (Previously Presented): A method of producing polysaccharide fibers according to claim 7, wherein the cation in the salt is divalent, trivalent or quadrivalent.

Claim 9 (Currently Amended): A method of producing polysaccharide fibers according to claim 8, wherein the cation in the salt is calcium, magnesium, iron, ~~aluminium~~ aluminum or zirconium.

Claim 10 (Previously Presented): A method of producing polysaccharide fibers according to claim 7, wherein the anion in the metal salt is chloride.

Claim 11 (Previously Presented): A method of producing polysaccharide fibers according to claim 1, wherein the polysaccharide is comprised of carboxymethyl cellulose, starch, gellan, pectin or alginate.

Claim 12 (Previously Presented): A method of producing polysaccharide fibers according to claim 1, further comprising the step of cross-linking the fiber covalently in a following stage.

Claim 13 (Previously Presented): A polysaccharide fiber, comprising a polysaccharide fiber having been produced according to the method of claim 1.

Claim 14 (Previously Presented): A polysaccharide fiber according to claim 13, wherein the fiber has been solvent-spun and has a degree of substitution greater than 0.35, is cross-linked, and insoluble, but swellable, in water.

Claim 15 (Previously Presented): An absorbent structure in an absorbent article, wherein the absorbent structure includes polysaccharide fibers having been produced according to claim 1.

Claim 16 (Previously Presented): The absorbent structure according to claim 15, wherein the absorbent article is selected from the group consisting of a diaper, an incontinence guard and a sanitary napkin.

Claims 17 and 18 (Canceled)

Claim 19 (Previously Presented): A method of producing polysaccharide fibers according to claim 1, wherein the bath is acidic.

Claim 20 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 1, wherein the polysaccharide fibers precipitate in the bath.

Claim 21 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 20, wherein the polysaccharide fibers precipitate in the bath simultaneously with the ionic cross-linking of the polysaccharide.